

ATA 59D

Historical Debates: The Politics of History Writing

Mehmet Yercil

Spring 2014

Wednesday 10:00-13:00

Office hours: Wednesday 14:00-16:00 and by appointment.

e-mail: mehmet.yercil@cantab.net

Course Description

History, it has been said, is nothing if not debate. This course will revisit arguably the most important historical debate of the late 20th century, the *Sonderweg*, which can be translated as Germany's "special path" to modernity.

With the benefit of hindsight, some historians of Germany argued in the 1970s and '80s that the presence of pre-industrial formations and a backboneless bourgeoisie in an advanced economy of breath-taking progress was a harbinger of imperialism, the Great War, and the fascism that would ensue. Other historians disagreed. Instead, they favoured looking at internal processes of German society to understand whether the German bourgeoisie was as powerless as claimed. They challenged the normative idea of "a lack" of a bourgeois revolution and analysed the German public sphere within its own dynamic to arrive at their conclusions. Both camps of the debate were represented by leftist historians.

The debate spun off many other subcategories of enormously important questions regarding the writing of history involving questions of teleology, of continuity vs contingency, of structures vs change, of public sphere and hegemony, of agency and political guilt. As answers to these questions had implications for the most calamitous period of world history which involved the First and the Second World Wars, the debate could only be extremely heated, and so it was.

This course will offer you a chance to familiarize yourself with some very important questions in history writing with the added benefit of applied case studies in Ottoman history. What was the driver of German interest –some would argue imperialism– in the Ottoman Empire?

After covering this debate with Ottoman applications in the first 8 weeks, we will take a look at how the cultural turn affected the *Sonderweg* debate, which was essentially a politico-social history. Further on, we will be looking at the transnational turn, as to how this current trend is affecting the politics of history writing. A case study of a recent best-seller on the decentred origins of the First World War will be analysed in terms of what we have learned from the *Sonderweg* discussion.

We will end the course with the study of Perry Anderson's –some would say controversial– thought-provoking interpretation of modern Turkish history.

Course Requirements

This is a seminar with rather dense reading assignments. You should make time for reading roughly 100-150 pages each week. If it proves to be too hard on you, there is some, but very little, scope for shortening some readings. We may discuss this as we go along.

Class attendance and participation in discussions based on weekly readings: 20%

One relatively short paper of 3000 words, which will be due in week 11, double-spaced: 30%

One longer paper of 4000 words due at the end of term, double-spaced: 50%

Course Schedule

Week 1 (19 February): An Introduction to Imperial Germany (the Kaiserreich, 1870-1918): The Continuity Problematic into the Nazi Period

Richard J. Evans, "Preface" and "The Legacy of the Past" in *The Coming of the Third Reich* (London: Allen Lane, 2003), xv-xxxiv, 1-59

Week 2 (26 February): An Introduction to the Sonderweg Debate

James Retallack, *Germany in the Age of Kaiser Wilhelm II*, Studies in European History (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire and London: Palgrave MacMillan, 1996), 1-15, 34-61, 92-107.

Georg G. Iggers, "Critical Theory and Social History: 'Historical Social Science' in the Federal Republic of Germany" in *Historiography in the Twentieth Century: From Scientific Objectivity to the Postmodern Challenge* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press), 65-77.

Richard J. Evans, "Introduction: Wilhelm II's Germany and the Historians" in *Society and Politics in Wilhelmine Germany*, ed. Richard J. Evans (London: Croom Helm and New York: Barnes & Noble, 1978), 11-39.

Week 3 (5 March): Sonderweg I: The Advocates

Barrington Moore, Jr., "Revolution from Above and Fascism" in *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy: Lord and Peasant in the Making of the Modern World* (Boston: Beacon Press, Beacon Paperback, 1967), 433-52.

Hans-Ulrich Wehler, *The German Empire, 1871-1918*, trans. Kim Traynor (Oxford and New York: Berg, 1985), 5-99, 170-81, 232-46 (originally published in German in Göttingen by Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1973).

Week 4 (12 March): Sonderweg II: The Critics (I)

David Blackbourn and Geoff Eley, *The Peculiarities of German History: Bourgeois Society and Politics in Nineteenth-Century Germany* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), 1-35 ("Introduction"), 51-61 ("German Historians and the Problem of Bourgeois Revolution"), 91-97 ("Backward State/Modern Economy: Unscrambling the German Couplet"), 127-143 ("Defining the State in Imperial Germany"), 176-205 ("Economy and Society: A Silent Bourgeois Revolution")

Week 5 (19 March): Sonderweg III: The Critics (II)

Geoff Eley, *Reshaping the German Right: Radical Nationalism and Political Change after Bismarck*, with a New Introduction (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980; Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1991), xiii-xxvi (“New Introduction”), 1-16 (“Introduction”), 19-40 (“*Honoratiorenpolitik* and the Crisis of National Liberalism”), 41-98 (“The Emergence of the Nationalist Pressure Groups”), 160-205 (“The Ideology of Radical Nationalism”).

Week 6 (26 March): Final Overview of the Sonderweg Debate: Continuity vs Contingency, Historical Change vs. Structure

Richard Evans, “From Hitler to Bismarck: Third Reich and Kaiserreich in Recent Historiography,” in *Rethinking German History: Nineteenth-Century Germany and the Origins of the Third Reich* (London: Allen and Unwin: 1987), 55-91.

Richard Evans, “The Myth of Germany’s Missing Revolution,” in *Rethinking German History: Nineteenth-Century Germany and the Origins of the Third Reich* (London: Allen and Unwin: 1987), 93-122.

Celia Applegate, “Metaphors of Continuity: The Promise and Perils of Taking the Long View,” review of *The Continuities of German History: Nation, Religion, and Race across the Long Nineteenth Century*, by Helmut Walser Smith, *German History* vol. 27, no. 3 (2009), 433-39.

Siegfried Weichlein, “Is There a Continuity in Modern German History? If Yes, How Many?” review of *German History in Modern Times: Four Lives of the Nation*, by William W. Hagen, *German History* vol. 31, no. 2 (2013), 239-44.

Week 7 (2 April): Test Case 1: German Interest in the Ottoman Empire: Railways and Colonial Aims. (Midterm take-home will be distributed.)

Course material to be distributed. We will be testing the sources of the interest in the Ottoman Empire in light of the *Sonderweg* debate.

Week 8 (9 April): Test Case 2: German Archaeology and the Ottoman Empire

We will be linking this topic to *Sonderweg* discussions.

Suzanne L. Marchand, “From Ideals to Institutions”, “The Vicissitudes of Grand-Scale Archaeology,” and “The Peculiarities of German Orientalism” in *Down from Olympus: Archaeology and Philhellenism in Germany, 1750-1970* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 36-74, 75-115, 188-227.

Week 9 (16 April): The Cultural Turn and Its Effects on the Politics of History

Richard J. Evans, “Whatever Became of the *Sonderweg*?” in *Rereading German History 1800-1996: From Unification to Reunification* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997), 12-22.

Geoff Eley, “Is There a History of the *Kaiserreich*?” in *Society, Culture, and the State in Germany 1870-1930*, ed. Geoff Eley (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1996), 1-42.

Geoff Eley, "German History and the Contradictions of Modernity: The Bourgeoisie, the State, and the Mastery of Reform," in *Society, Culture, and the State in Germany 1870-1930*, ed. Geoff Eley (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1996), 67-103.

Helmut Walser Smith and Geoff Eley, "What is History?" review and discussion of *A Crooked Line: From Cultural History to the History of Society*, by Geoff Eley, *German History* vol. 25, no. 4 (2007), 629-38.

Week 10 (30 April): The Problematic of Eurocentrism's Repudiation and the Arrival of the Global
Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2000), 1-46.

Vinay Bahl and Arif Dirlik, "Introduction," in *History after the Three Worlds: Post-Eurocentric Historiographies*, Arif Dirlik, Vinay Bahl and Peter Gran, eds. (Boulder: Rowman and Littlefield, 2000), 3-23.

Arif Dirlik, "Is There History after Eurocentrism? Globalism, Postcolonialism, and the Disavowal of History," in *History after the Three Worlds: Post-Eurocentric Historiographies*, Arif Dirlik, Vinay Bahl and Peter Gran, eds., (Boulder: Rowman and Littlefield, 2000), 25-47

Week 11 (7 May): The Transnational (or Global) Turn and its Effects on the Politics of History (FIRST PAPER DUE)

David Blackbourn, Geoff Eley, Suzanne Marchand and Helmut Walser Smith, "The Long Nineteenth Century," forum interview by Jan Palmowski, *German History* vol. 26, no. 1 (2008), 72-91.

Jennifer L. Jenkins, Kris Manjapra, Hoi-eun Kim, Young-Sun Hong, and Corinna R. Unger, "Asia, Germany and the Transnational Turn," forum interview by Bradley Naranch, *German History* vol. 28, no. 4 (2010), 515-36.

Lora Wildenthal, Jürgen Zimmerer, Russell A. Berman, Jan Rüter, Bradley Naranch, and Birthe Kundrus, "The German Colonial Imagination," forum interview by Maiken Umbach, *German History* vol. 26, no. 2 (2008), 251-71.

David Ciarlo, "Globalizing German Colonialism," *German History* vol. 26, no. 2 (2008), 285-98.

Andreas Fahrmeir, review of *Das Kaiserreich Transnational: Deutschland in der Welt 1871-1914*, *German History* vol. 26, no. 2 (2008), 322-23.

Week 12 (14 May): Test Case 3: A Bestseller and the Debate on the Origins of the First World War.
James Retallack, "Rattling the Sabre: *Weltpolitik* and the Great War" in *Germany in the Age of Kaiser Wilhelm II*, Studies in European History (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire and London: Palgrave MacMillan, 1996), 73-91.

Chris Clark, "Introduction" and "Conclusion" in *The Sleepwalkers: How Europe Went to War in 1914* (London: Penguin, 2013), xxi-xxix, 555-62.

Annika Mombauer, "The First World War: Inevitable, Avoidable, Improbable or Desirable? Recent Interpretations on War Guilt and the War's Origins," *German History* vol. 25, no. 1 (2007), 78-95

Week 13 (21 May): Case 4: Perry Anderson's Modern Turkish History

Perry Anderson, "Turkey," in *The New Old World* (London and New York: Verso, 2009), 392-472.

Final paper will be due on Friday, 16 June at 11 am.